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SUBJECT: COMMITTEE ON WORLD FOOD SECURITY (CFS): REFORM PROCESS  
UNDERWAY, MOSTLY AT IDEOLOGICAL LEVEL

REF: USUN 9

11. (U) This cable is sensitive but unclassified. Not for  
internet distribution or dissemination outside USG channels.

Summary:  
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12. (U) Within the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO),  
efforts are well under way to reform the Committee on World Food  
Security (CFS), a committee created in the 1970s with the goal  
of having it serve as a convergence point for the UN system to  
address agriculture and food security issues. Following last  
October's CFS session, members agreed that the committee had not  
lived up to its potential or expectations, and major reforms  
were necessary to assure its future relevance. A five-member  
Bureau, under the leadership of the Permanent Representative of  
Argentina, has been leading debate on the issue, and convened  
four working groups to address various aspects of the intended  
reform. Those working groups, the Bureau, CFS members, and  
others met all day on June 23 to review progress and debate  
relevant issues.

The CFS "Contact Group"  
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13. (U) To assist with the reform process, the CFS Bureau  
created a "Contact Group" composed of member states, UN/Bretton  
Woods Institution representatives and other international  
agencies (i.e., Bioversity International), and civil society  
organizations. Present at the June 23 meetings were David  
Nabarro, Coordinator of the UN High Level Task Force Secretariat  
(HLTF/S), WFP, IFAD, Bioversity, World Bank, numerous member  
states, and a variety of NGO representatives. The CFS Bureau  
also created four "Working Groups" to contribute to the reform  
process, assisted by "facilitators" from FAO. The groups are:  
WG I, "Role and Vision" of a revitalized CFS, coordinated by  
Sudan; WG II, "Membership and Decision-taking," coordinated by  
Colombia; WG III, "Mechanisms and Procedures," coordinated by  
Switzerland; and, WG IV, coordinated by the U.S. Each group met  
separately during the day to prepare for an evening plenary  
session. This work is expected to culminate with a final paper  
from the CFS Bureau on its reform proposals, for delivery at  
October's CFS session in Rome.

Working Group I - Role and Vision  
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14. (U) From the start of the reform process, members have been unified in saying that the current CFS has failed to become relevant or influential. A revitalized CFS, they insist, should be inclusive, open to all major stakeholders such as UN HLTf members, NGO/CSO reps, small farmers' associations, producer organizations, private sector, and philanthropies. Some argue (e.g., France and G-77 leaders) that CFS should serve as a home for the emerging "Global Partnership on Agriculture and Food Security" (or, GPAFS). Members generally supported the vision outlined in a zero-draft document prepared by the Secretariat following consultations with the CFS Contact Group - that is, "to eliminate hunger and achieve food security for all." Many participants (led by Brazil) insisted that the "full realization of the Right to Food" be included as a central theme for the CFS. Other proposed that CFS serve as a policy convergence platform which could, among other things, promote implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines on the Right to Food.

15. (SBU) Participants expressed support that the CFS be a "platform" or "space" for policy convergence informed by expert advice and lessons learned from past FAO attempts like that of the World Food Council. Other principal roles suggested included coordination and alignment among agencies, donors, and governments, especially regarding more efficient use of existing resources. There was general (though not unanimous) sentiment that CFS would not serve as a forum for financial "pledging." Future discussions of Working Group I will consider ways to prioritize an agenda for CFS, perhaps through a phased approach and implementation of an as-yet undefined results-based framework. During the plenary, Brazil and several NGOs objected to a summary document provided by the group's coordinator - criticizing the lack of attention to points they had made in working group meetings (Comment: Many of the U.S. talking

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points from the working group were well-represented in the summary, but may now be watered down to satisfy the G-77. End comment.)

Working Group II- Rights for Non-voting Members?

16. (U) Working Group II reached consensus on membership, but needed more clarification on the decision-making process. The zero draft proposed three alternatives for membership composition. The first option maintains the status quo of full membership for states and observer status for all other stakeholders. The second option allows for full participation of a broad array of stakeholders, including NGOs, farmers' organizations, private foundations, research institutions, people's organizations representing vulnerable groups (youth, rural women, urban poor, indigenous), and the private sector, while maintaining the exclusive right to vote for governments. The third option in which some non-state stakeholders would have equal membership, including voting rights, received some support from Northern European delegates as well as the NGOs International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC) and Via Campesina. The consensus at the conclusion of Working Group II settled on option two, although some representatives challenged this during the evening plenary session. Nabarro encouraged the Chair to invite participation from the private sector as well as relevant trade bodies like the WTO and UNCTAD, a point that had been stressed earlier by the U.S. The working group will meet again on July 23 to review an updated draft on membership elements.

Working Group III - More Details Needed on Rules and Procedures

17. (U) According to the zero draft prepared by the Secretariat, Working Group III was charged with defining the new procedural, administrative, financial, and legal elements of a reformed CFS. Group III found its work hindered by insufficient communication of the conclusions reached by Working Groups I and II, a problem faced by all groups because discussions took place simultaneously. Members agreed that CFS is a process as opposed

to an event, and that it must be "living and inclusive," responding to food security issues as they arise, not annually in formal sessions. From the HLTF perspective, Nabarro opined that the reform process appeared to be too rushed and ambitious to make an artificial October 2009 deadline. He proposed a phased-in approach whereby WGs would focus on putting into place activities that would assist certain stakeholders in the short-term, followed by a remodelling two-three years later. In addition to the Rome-based food agencies, Nabarro, Australia and the U.S. advocated for a strong, joint secretariat that includes stakeholders such as the UN Secretariat, IFIs and trade/health/human rights organizations. So as to avoid the perception that CFS is FAO-centric, the U.S. went even further by suggesting that CFS report to a larger body (e.g., UNGA) rather than to FAO Conference as proposed in the zero draft. The working group will meet again on July 8 to discuss the elements in more detail following coordination with the other working groups.

#### Working Group IV - Expert Panel Looking Likely

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18. (U) A list of substantive questions had been supplied to members on the expected role, structure, governance, selection process, and funding for the proposed High Level Panel of Experts (HLPE), WG IV members spoke mostly in generalities. To the questions of some who questioned why this panel was necessary, the Secretariat clarified that expert panels existed at FAO, but none in the multi-disciplinary area of food security. Members agreed that a HLPE could add value to the work of CFS and others as a "public good." Similarly, members stressed that any HLPE should be informed by experiences at the ground level, and therefore be flexible and responsive to the needs of the poor and hungry. Some members suggested that the role of the HLPE would be to serve as the scientific basis by which CFS could debate and make policy recommendations. Several members indicated their preference for the use of the word "network" rather than panel.

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19. (U) In order for an expert panel attached to CFS to have credibility, some members suggested the HLPE start small and subsequently enlarge over time. No conclusion was reached on the question of sequencing, with some members supporting the formation of the panel apace with the overall CFS reform, while others preferring to wait until the roles and mechanisms of a revitalized CFS are concretely decided in October. Members called for avoidance of duplication by any new panel, and repeated that any new panel should not do its own research but utilize existing, peer-reviewed source materials. Members agreed that further discussion on cost, structure (including selection modalities), governance, terms of reference, and other issues was necessary. Members will attempt to decide on more concrete proposals during informal meetings in the coming weeks.

Comment  
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10. (SBU) The discussion on CFS reform continues at a very conceptual, ideological basis, largely lacking in operational, country-led focus. The G-77 (led by Brazil) is pushing hard to create a venue in which to press its parochial interests - many of which could be problematic to the USG. These include trade system reform, a human rights-based approach to food security including more aggressive implementation of the "Right to Food," land tenure/reform, and monitoring mechanisms for how well countries are ensuring food security. Despite US Mission interventions, there continues to be too little attention in this debate toward assuring good governance at the national level, creation of enabling environments for market-driven results, flexible country-led approaches, and improved "coordination" and delivery by the various actors within the UN system.

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